

N^o. 418 rue St. Honoré
Saturday, 19th April

Sir,

The few moments, which I had the honor, some days since, to pass in your presence were so fully occupied, that there was no time for me to mention several subjects which I had upon my mind, Among these were one or two, which had been suggested to me on reading your "Histoire de la Géographie du Nouveau Continent."

In that work (Vol I. p. 62.) you mention the fact that Columbus, in his letter of the Autumn of 1498 to Ferdinand & Isabella, cites passages both from the Imago Mundi of Alliacus and from the fragments of Gerson, and you continue; — "on pourroit croire qu'il possédait le recueil que je viens de citer
"à moins qu'il n'eût avec lui, à bord de son vaisseau, dans son 3^e voyage une copie
His Excellency,
Bern van Hamstel.
Mf.

"Mf. de l'Imago Mundi seul, et que la mention
"simultanée des noms d'Alliaeno et de Gesm se
"soit purement accidentelle" — (p. 63.)

Your supposition, I have the strongest
reason to believe, is correct. I have held
in my hand the copy which belonged to
Columbus, which is covered with his marginal
notes, and which corresponds to the description
you give of the volume you have examined
with so much care. This copy, to which
Las Casas makes such frequent allusion, is in
the Biblioteca Colombina of Seville, where is
likewise the book of Prophecies, from which
Navarrete has taken the most interesting notes.

This copy of Pedro Aliaes was discovered
accidentally by Mr. Washington Irving, after he
had closed his labors for the life of Columbus
and his Companions. Mr. Irving gave me an
indication of the No. of the book and its place in
the library, and when in Seville I often examined

it, but was refused permission to copy its marginal notes.

The Archives of the Indies, were freely opened to me, by order from Madrid, but in this Columbian library (which is under the control of the Archbishop, and Canonigos of the Cathedral) I felt the illiberal influence of its nominal proprietors. While examining Eastern ruins I have been watched by Bedouin sheiks, anxious to seize upon the gold and hidden treasure which my observations were to bring to light; but the jealousy of these Arabs was nothing when compared with that of the clerical librarians of Seville.

In your work (Vol iii p 283) you allude to the writings of Oviedo, and say: — "M. Poeppig

"vient de decouvrir dans la bibliotheque de

"l'universite de Leipzig l'edition princeps d'Oviedo

"(Salamanca 1547) par Juan de Pinta à laquelle

"sont ajoutés" R. h. { 1^o Libro de Naufragios
2^o Relacion de la Conquista
de Peru por Xeres, R. h.

A copy of this edition, with the works adjoined ⁽¹⁵⁴⁷⁾ is in the library of Harvard University near Boston; and

a copy is also in the Bibliothèque Royale in Paris.
The Bib^l^e Royale has also a copy of the 20th Book of Oviedo,
being the commencement of the second part. "Segunda
"parte de la General Historia de las Indias, escrita
"por el Capitan Gonzalo de Oviedo, de. G. en Valladolid;
"por Francisco de Cordova, 1547." — at the end
are these words printed ["no se imprimio mas
desta obra, porqu^e murio el autor."]]

By reference to this edition of Salamanca, light may
be thrown on one curious fact; namely, the exact
weight of that famous grano d'oro which was lost
by Bobadilla's shipwreck in 1502. Oviedo in
the first edition of his work "De la natural hystoria
de las Indias, Toledo 1526" declares Fo. XLVI (Cap 84)

"El mayor de todos los granos q^e hasta oy en ag.^{ta}
y indias se ha visto, fue el que se perdio, de x x +
" — ~~quien~~ pesava 3200 Castellanos, q^e son una arroba
" y siete libras, q^e son sesenta y quatro Marcos d'oro."

In your Historie de la Geog^{ra} n. (Vol iii p 331) you
have alluded to this grano and given the estimates

of Las Casas — 3600 Castellanos

Herrera — 3600 "

Peter Martyr 3310 "

Oviedo (32 livres) 3200. " and I perceive that this

last estimate

last estimate is the one to which you have adhered, in your "Asia Centrale", where the grano of Bobadilla is compared with the pépite of Tzarevo-Alexandrofski. Now, it would appear, if we may believe Oviedo, that in these different statements of Herrera & Peter Martyr "each was right and each was wrong", for he says in the edition of his Historia R, Salamanca 1547, that

{ he is anxious to correct an error which he made in his memoria printed at Toledo in 1525. He stated there, the weight of the great grano, to be 3200 pesos d'oro, but this was without reference to the documents. The real weight was 3600 pesos, but from this there must be deducted 300 pesos for the gangue and the weight of pure gold will be 3300 pesos.

See Oviedo, — ed 1547. — lib. III. Cap. VII. Folio XXVIII.

333, 8 Cologne.
66

14028
14028
15.4308

These 3300 pesos are equal to 66 marcs. — But what was the mark? — Was it the mark of Castile, or was it the mark of Cologne? — I can find no means to determine this; and the Essay of Clemencino (Memorias de la Acad. His. Madrid. V.) with its two or three palpable errors, only serves to

to make "darkness visible." It is the same with the "Instruccion de Fieles Almotacenes" - Madrid 1788, which, filled up as it is with contradictory ordenanzas and pragmaticas, one day proclaiming the mark of Toledo another day that of Burgos, another day that of Cologne, - leaves the enquirer in a labyrinth of perplexity.

Clementine says (t. VI p. 509 Mem. acas. Hij) that the "mark of Cologne was made the unit by Alonso XI in 1348, and that it is so at the present day."! Can this be correct? - but was it not the unit during the reign of Charles V.; and who took such pains to bring into uniformity the weights of the Empire?

I hope you will pardon me for troubling you as I do, and I throw myself on your kind indulgence; expressing at the same time, the sentiment of high respect, with which I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient, humble servant,

George Sumner.

P.S. I have not the honor to know Mr. Arago,
but it has occurred to me that the notice
[which I enclose from a New York Journal] of the
experiments with the Magnetic Telegraph in the
U.S. would have a certain interest for him.
— The means employed there, to dispense with
wires in crossing rivers, have not that I am
aware of been tried in Europe.

J. L.

Mr Sumner
Beverly Hills